Chapter 1

Postcolonial Development and Sustainability

The independence of Papua New Guinea was marked by both bold anticipate and uncomfortable ambivalence. The Constitution of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea (1975) brought the nation-state into being on the basis of a set of careful principles as far-reaching as its constitutional ancestors, including the Declaration of the Rights of Man (1789) and the Constitution of the United States (1861). It has often been noted that the beginning of the Republic of France, framed by its principles of liberté, égalité, and fraternité, represented a faltering but long-term reorganization of sovereignty around the centrality of a new political constituency—the people. The recognition of the category of “the people” and the enunciation of the ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity signified a turning point in political history. It was also an important milestone in naming the conditions for the formation of nation-states across the globe. The new hopes were carried forward in the Constitution of the United States, as signaled by the brilliantly simple naming of the authors of the Constitution as “We the People.” For all their limitations, both documents as part of a global shift toward written constitutions confirmed the “community of all citizens” as the basis for modern political life. It might seem strange to begin a discussion of Papua New Guinea by referring to eighteenth-century constitutional theory, but it has a crucial point. The Constitution of Papua New Guinea was just as searching as those documents and in important respects went much further.

Alongside principles that, at least in theory, afforded the people dynamic self-determination, social equity, and communality, the PNG Constitution emphasized the importance of ecological sustainability, grass-roots economic viability, and respect for customary ways of life. As a postcolonial nation it recognized a continuing “prehistory.” This was a history that could not be expressed as a singular narrative of becoming a nation-state. Whereas most constitutions
are one-dimensionally modern and center on the nation-state as the most important level of community and polity, the PNG Constitution proclaimed a more complex aspiration. It gave expression to two possible basic reformations of the modern nation-state. First, it reconfigured modern ideals of the community-polity in relation to the continuing importance of tribal and traditional ways of life. Second, it placed the nation-state in a continuing relation to other social institutions—in particular, local community and family. Unlike, for example, France, the United States, and Australia, the country was not legally conceived as a nation of individuals. The importance of these reformulations cannot be underestimated.

The Constitution of Papua New Guinea was a doubly extraordinary document given that it was written in the context of a prevailing global orthodoxy of large-scale capitalist development and megaprojects. Most mainstream development writers, including the author of a book titled *How It All Began: Origins of the Modern Economy*, published in the same year as the Constitution, presented the normal path to development as systematic capitalism leading to “high-mass consumption.” To the contrary, according to the PNG Constitution, economic development in Papua New Guinea would be built on a different foundation:

1. A fundamental re-orientation of our attitudes and the institutions of government, commerce, education and religion towards Papua New Guinean forms of participation, consultation, and consensus, and a continuous renewal of the responsiveness of these institutions to the needs and attitudes of the People; and
2. Particular emphasis in our economic development to be placed on small-scale artisan, service and business activity; and
3. Recognition that the cultural, commercial and ethnic diversity of our people is a positive strength, and for the fostering of a respect for, and appreciation of, traditional ways of life and culture, including language, in all their richness and variety, as well as for a willingness to apply these ways dynamically and creatively for the tasks of development; and
4. Traditional villages and communities to remain as viable units of Papua New Guinean society, and for active steps to be taken to improve their cultural, social, economic and ethical quality.²

The arguments of the present book conform to the terms of those articles but suggest that, given the slow crisis in contemporary Papua New Guinea, active processes are needed to make them possible.³ The Constitution reflected the hopes of an emerging postcolonial state and was intended to enable Papua New Guinea to develop in a way that was self-determining and self-orienting.
It reflected what was loosely called the “Melanesian Way”—sometimes an empty cliché, sometimes a romantic allusion, and occasionally a glimmer of an alternative.

The country was to be developed with landownership rights for the people, focusing on small locally owned and run enterprises. The Constitution explicitly articulated an understanding of society in which “individual and community interdependence are basic principles” (emphasis added) and in which development would occur “primarily through the use of Papua New Guinean forms of social and political organization.” The cultural, political, and ecological formations of individual communities were to drive economic development in ways that reflected “small-scale artisan, service and business activity.” Development was to be built on the peoples’ skills and resources. This was part of an explicit concern to mitigate the risk that the wrong kind of economic development could encourage “dependence on imported skills and resources,” undermine Papua New Guinea’s “self-reliance and self-respect,” or promote dependency on donor countries. The framers of the Constitution could not have been more prescient about the dangers. Many of the problems they identified have been realized—some tragically, some as farcical reruns of earlier tragedies, and some as manageable problems endemic to any development process.

**Constituting a State of Nonconforming Communities**

One problem that the constitutional framers overlooked was the variable forms of customary tribal and traditional political authority—from “big man” societies to paramount chiefdoms—and how these were to be accommodated within a unitary modern state with a stable party system. On the eve of Papua New Guinea’s independence, many individuals—resident expatriates, overseas observers, and local Papua New Guineans—were deeply skeptical about the future of an independent Papua New Guinea. Some people in the New Guinea Highlands were apprehensive of being dominated by better-educated coastal and island people, while Papuans around the capital Port Moresby feared being swamped by immigration from the Highlands, a sentiment that continues today.

A series of microseparatist and local protest groups arose in the 1970s, ranging from the Kabisawali movement in the Trobriands led by John Kasaipwalova (who now lives an hour’s walk from one of the communities featured in this book), to Papua Besena in Central Province led by Josephine Abaijah, to the Highlands Liberation Front, which was begun far from the Highlands in Port Moresby at the University of Papua New Guinea. The Mataungan Association in Tolai East New Britain, which after independence joined the newly formed coalition government, projected Tolai autonomy unless Whites ultimately left
the country. Shortly before independence, a Bougainville secessionist group led by Leo Hannett and Father John Momis (de facto chairman of the Constitutional Planning Committee) unsuccessfully declared the independence of the “North Solomons Republic.” This movement among others became one of the key pressures for forcing the emergent state to devolve power to the provinces.

In the cities such as Lae, Rabaul, and Moresby, this process was complicated in the period before independence as different groups used the climate of political acuity to voice their various grievances, including issues of general social inequity and the pay and conditions of workers in the public service and teaching professions. The month of June 1974 in Port Moresby and Lae was marked by postindependence street demonstrations. One demonstration, extending over two days, was organized by the United Church Women’s Fellowship in Hohola. It was intended to voice concerns about racism, social conditions in the city, and emerging postcolonial class differences as locals took over from departing Australians in positions of power. Two thousand women were reported to have joined the march. The Konedobu office of the chief minister, Michael Somare, was stoned and windows smashed. Without really understanding the background to the demonstration and the nature of the Papua Besena movement, the *Sydney Morning Herald* attributed the event to “Papua’s separatist firebrand, Miss Josephine Abaijah.” Commentators, looking to the general experience of postcolonial states elsewhere, spoke of the likelihood of political anarchy, an army coup, or authoritarian single-party dominance, and of economic collapse.

During the late twentieth century, Papua New Guinea did not follow any of those predicted paths to debilitating crisis or collapse. However, neither did the country follow the spirit of its own constitution. By any measure, the years from independence to the present have been hard. Instead of a complex but reflexively negotiated meld of customary and modern modes of governance, a modern compromise was entered into that accentuated and distorted one form of customary governance—the “big man” as a position of accumulated status—inside a liberal-democratic state that gave out money to politicians to embody that status. Instead of a complex meld of customary and modern development, the two forms of politics existed in ugly tension with each other, often to the detriment of local communities. As politicians reached out to mainstream ideas of development, the state became dependent on an unfortunate mixture of foreign aid and extraction industries.

and complex development industry in Papua New Guinea comprises several interrelated government departments and agencies as well as private companies contracted out to deliver aid projects. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) funds both AusAID and the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR), which, in turn, support development projects ranging from infrastructure construction and health campaigns to agricultural research and extension programs. In the latest round, the main AusAID delivery process in Papua New Guinea, Strongim Pipol, Strongim Nesen (Empower the People, Strengthen the Nation), with funding of up to $100 million over five years, is managed by URS, a massive engineering corporation headquartered in San Francisco and one of the top fifty contractors in the Iraq and Afghanistan “reconstruction” process.

Public policy think tanks, such as the Canberra-based Centre for Independent Studies (CIS), the Lowy Institute, and the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) also play a role by contributing policy advice and commentary to government departments in Australia. Each of these development agencies, companies, think tanks, and consultants is responsible not only for informing the delivery of Australia’s aid, but also for ensuring that the aid program addresses Australia’s economic and strategic national interests. This is part of the problem. Many individuals working in this area may have different views from the dominant policy directions, but at an institutional level conventional notions of modern capitalist “development” and the Australian “national interest” prevail.

Now, more than three decades since the vision for a Melanesian form of development was first articulated—though never substantially enacted in practice—the nation-state of Papua New Guinea has entered a period of what might be called “slow crisis.” We have to be careful in using such a condensed and potentially loaded term and to be precise about its meaning. First, the polity across all levels of government continues to be fragile with counterproductive and fragmented relations down into local communities and limited capacity at the local levels to deliver basic services or consistent rule of law. It is a fragile state. We do not mean to suggest, as many definitions of the term imply, that as a fragile polity Papua New Guinea faces the prospect of becoming a failing or failed state. The PNG political process remains firmly democratic in procedure, with Organic Law reforms around local-level government, party stability, and preferential voting systems making some (minimal) difference to improving stability and accountability. Corruption permeates the activities of some individual state administrators, politicians, and business operators, but active attempts are being taken to curtail both political and economic corruption, and it is far from accurate to say that a state of corruption defines the polity.
Second, while the nation remains fragmented, with little sense of common vision beyond general enunciations of the Melanesian Way or state-based consensus on some economic goals as spelled out in the Medium Term Development Strategy, it is not the case that the nation-state of a thousand tribes is in danger of breaking up. With care, Papua New Guinea could develop an integrating ideology of “unity in diversity” that has none of the authoritarian implications of the concept as it has been used in Indonesia and more depth than achieved under the rhetoric of multiculturalism in Australia or the melting pot in the United States. National sentiment might be a superficial layer over profound cultural differences, but this can be seen in some ways as an advantage rather than a problem.

Third, the nation’s diverse local communities are being placed under increasing pressure. This process is facing communities across the Global South and North in different ways; older intersecting forms of solidaristic integration are being hollowed out, with community resilience and capacity to respond to change more and more dependent on outside resources. In Papua New Guinea, communities have never conformed to the modern romantic notion of islands of rural idyll (see Part II), but they are increasingly challenged by different expectations and ways of life. These conflicting expectations are compounded by the weakness of the state in paradoxical tension with a modern “cargo-cult” mentality that treats the state, or rather politicians, as intermittent providers of “good things”—albeit with no trust in them delivering. However, while processes of global change such as financial crises and commodity-price fluctuations increasingly affect communities in Papua New Guinea, they were not subject to the same intensity of effect that ravaged communities in other parts of Southeast Asia after the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997–1998. At the level of local and informal economies, for example (Chapter 7), Papua New Guinea was relatively resilient in the face of the 2008–2010 “global financial meltdown.” Even NASFUND, the key national superannuation fund for Papua New Guinea, remained relatively secure through the massive global fluctuations. Increasing food insecurity in certain parts of the country, for example, appears to be more a function of increasing population numbers, reliance on store-bought commodities, and climate fluctuation than an intrinsic vulnerability.

The concept of “slow crisis” is used here drawing upon the classical and more ambiguous sense of a turning point (a krisis) that requires a response. It does not imply that a single decision will be sufficient to enhance the resilience of communities and political institutions in the face of massive change. Rather, it is to say that the cultural, political, and economic fabric of PNG communities around the country, still strong in many places, is being slowly weakened by uneven processes that are affecting local lifeways across the globe—the intensi-
fication of rapacious forms of globalizing capitalism, the overriding of production cultures by consumerism, the steady pull of unsustainable kinds of urbanization, the proselytizing reach of globalizing religions, together with effect of population increases and the continued degrading of the base environment.

In many cases these processes are invited in, and in some cases they are sustainably managed. However, in Papua New Guinea, local manifestations of the slow crisis continue to press into people’s lives: sporadic but chronic violence, creeping civil decay, uncontrolled rural-urban migration, insidious political corruption, misplaced interventions from the outside, and a continuing overemphasis on large-scale corporate-led development such as through palm oil production, or logging and mining.\(^1\)

The slow crisis always teeters on the edge of turning into a general disaster. The latest megaproject, the Liquefied Natural Gas project, has, in the tradition of Ok Tedi and Bougainville, created much hyperbole about potential social returns, but it may also be the basis for cultural disaster as communities fight over the spoils. An infrastructure and building boom has ensued in Port Moresby, but the construction will be concluded by 2014, and the project has uncertain long-term benefits. Such pressures present increasingly difficult challenges to the well-being of the nation-state even if a superficial sense of nationhood continues to be reproduced in the language and practice of “our country”—from the rhetoric of politics and sport to the advertising slogans of global soft drink manufactu

15 debilitating urban

16 In the face of this horror, some remarkable individuals, communities, and organizations in Papua New Guinea are working together to respond to such issues—these are our source of hope.

**Defining Development and Sustainability**

Development in this part of the world, as elsewhere in the Global South, continues to be a struggle. The lives of the people that corporate or state-led development is meant to enrich are often being made more difficult by the very developmental process that purports to help them. It remains true in Papua New Guinea as elsewhere that, despite well-intentioned attempts to the contrary, most development projects do not know how to engage with the complexity of community life. In many cases, while a paradigm shift from “things” to “people” has been discussed and encouraged, it has not been translated into practice. A consensus has emerged among commentators in the fields of education, anthropology, community development, and political ecology that sustainable
development is something that comes from within communities rather than something that can be imposed from the outside. This nevertheless leaves many questions.

Within a landscape changed by the colonial experience and beset by the forces of globalization—most pressingly a global demand for natural resources—how are issues of self-determination, social equity and communality, ecological sustainability, grass-roots economic viability, and respect for customary ways of life to be negotiated in practice? From the most remote of the Highlands to the island communities to the densely compact settlements of Port Moresby, what paths to development are sustainable, practical, and appropriate? How can Papua New Guinea accommodate an indigenous and organic concept of “development” that takes account of the country’s history, the rich diversity of its human experiences, and the changing nature of a society that is being unevenly shaped by processes of postcolonial change? Why do some community groups remain resilient—despite pressing and sometimes insurmountable odds—while others fall apart, becoming increasingly fragmented or at the worst resorting to sometimes the most heinous forms of violence? These are questions to which we intend to make a contribution.

The term “development” itself is complex and difficult. In the corporate sphere, it usually refers to the generating of physical infrastructure, political stability, and workforce training that will enhance company profit taking. In the state-led model of development, it commonly means building layers of civil administration and providing the legislative, infrastructural, and educational framework for economic-based development, all understood in terms of the nation-building program. In the area of community and civil-society studies, ideas of development range from getting more things to the people or building social capital, to alternative notions of the enhancement of community sustainability, resilience, security, and adaptability. Will there be space in Papua New Guinea for maintaining alternate patterns of development? How are the concepts of “development” and “development rights” to be understood, or even renegotiated, in communities where no such terms exist in their everyday languages?

Here we define development as social change—that brings about a significant and patterned shift in the technologies, techniques, infrastructure, and/or associated life forms of a place or people. There is no presumption in this definition that development entails modernization, but neither is there any suggestion of a “return to the past” except in the sense that certain forms of practice enacted in the past can be chosen in the present. There is no suggestion that all development is good. And given the possibility of unintended consequences, reversals, and counterproductive outcomes, there is no suggestion that all “good development” is sustainable.
Nor, it should be said, is all “sustainable development” good development. This last point is one rarely made in the mainstream Global North. In Papua New Guinea, activists, constantly confronting the rhetoric of development, tend to distinguish between “real development . . . about local people” and “giaman development”—that is, development characterized by false (giaman in Tok Pisin) short-term or meaningless promises about roads, jobs, and cash. Papua New Guinea is unfortunately rife with the giaman development.

Related to this, Marshall Sahlins gives us the concept of “develop-man,” drawing on the Tok Pisin term defelopman, to describe the indigenous tendency in the Pacific to actively use the material outcomes of capitalism to reassert a fetishized version of customary relations and rituals fueled by the modern. Big men become bigger, but the process of customary reproduction becomes more fragile. Speaking with sad irony, he suggests that in the passage from develop-man to modern economic development, customary people have had “to pass through a certain cultural desert to reach the promised land of ‘modernization’: they had to experience a certain humiliation.” Rather, in order to treat sustainable development in a holistic way, we draw on an orienting method called “circles of sustainability” that suggests that the social can be understood in terms of four domains: economy, ecology, politics, and culture. These different domains are then considered in the context of layers of changing dominant formations of social life. In relation to the passage of develop-man toward modern economic development, Joel Robbins picks up on the paradoxical developmental outcome of this layering within a framework of dominance. Christianity in Papua New Guinea, in some forms, not only makes humiliation of tribal practices and belief “part of the coherent story of self-development, it goes so far as to give it a positive valence. . . . Once it has done so in a particular locale, the era of develop-man in that place has in important respects come to an end.” Moreover, “it encourages converts to become conscious of their ‘culture,’ a hypostatized image of their past way of life. Once people have reified their culture, it is but a short step for them to begin making conscious efforts to discard it and replace it with something new.”

The classic 1987 report Our Common Future, more commonly known as the Brundtland Report, defined sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” This definition still works, though its meaning turns on the undefined implications of the word “needs” and the assumed importance of cultural, political, and ecological needs rather than just economic material needs. The notion of “community sustainability” is a more recent one. Depending on how it is defined, it can be both a more specific and a more expansive concept than that of “sustainable development.” It is more specific in
that it looks at the practices and actions that are needed in relation to existing communities to achieve sustainable development, yet it is more expansive in that it has the potential to move beyond schematic or instrumental accounts of sustainable development to encompass the various domains of the social, including cultural aspects of how communities cohere through time. Beyond such general accounts, however, there is little agreement on what it means or entails, particularly in integrated social terms. While much research has been carried out on community sustainability from an economic or even ecological standpoint, little work exists on the potential of cultural practices in strengthening communities.

Some writers point to the vagueness of the concept of “community sustainability.” Voth and Moon, for example, identify four broad categories of contributors to the relevant research literature. These are designers, including architects and planning professionals, who frame community sustainability in terms of planning processes; practitioners, including politicians, local government officials, and community groups and organizations, for which community is defined primarily in terms of municipalities or similar administrative units, and the focus of sustainability are ecological issues; visionaries, including agriculturalists, economists, architects, and planning professionals, who define communities in terms of association and interest and focus on issues of economic development, appropriate use of technology, and energy conservation; and, finally, activists, including environmentalists, people interested in bioregionalism, social ecologists, and others, whose focus is on community impacts on the natural environment. Despite the ever-burgeoning literature that touches on community sustainability, noting many of its positives, including the emphasis on community as agents of change and participatory decision-making processes, Voth and Moon conclude that “the idea of community sustainability per se hardly exists…. Vague abstractions like ‘social capital’ are discussed, but few details are provided about what really makes a community sustainable in terms of infrastructure, economics, culture, decision-making processes, and so on.”

Here we define community sustainability as the long-term durability of a community as it negotiates changing practices and meanings across all the domains of culture, politics, economics, and ecology. Again, it should be clear that communities can be sustainable without being good places to live.

Part of the significance of the present project, then, lies in its attempt to address the gaps in the current literature on community sustainability and to extend theoretical observations about a new qualitative conception of community sustainability informed by substantial and innovative empirical research. In this context, sustainability is conceived in terms that include not just practices tied to development, but also forms of well-being and social bonds, community-
building, social support, and infrastructure renewal. In short, the concern with sustainability here entails undertaking an analysis of how communities are sustained through time, how they cohere and change, rather than being constrained within discourses and models of development. From another angle, this project presents an account of community sustainability detached from instrumental concerns with narrow economic development. While concerns about production and exchange continue to be imperative for community sustainability, this project will suggest that an approach driven by economistic concerns has a tendency to be reductive and will fail to account for the real complexity of interactions and effects produced by the matrix of cultural, political, economic, and ecological practices.

Defining Formations of Community

Ever since Ferdinand Tönnies introduced the terms “gemeinschaft” and “gesellschaft” to describe a shift from a society dominated by relatively stable, mainly nonurban, communities that emphasized mutual obligation and trust (gemeinschaften) to more mobile, highly urbanized societies in which individual self-interest comes to the fore (gesellschaften), commentators have been interested in the ever-changing nature of community. Until recently, belonging to a community was usually seen as unqualifiedly positive. While community is now seen in more circumspect terms, the erosion of community is still predominantly interpreted as being the cause of social problems. However, defining community is not straightforward, and this complexity has become an abiding concern of scholars of Melanesia.

In the West, the term “community” is often used interchangeably with “neighborhood” to refer to the bonds that come with living cheek by jowl with others in a shared space. Alternatively, it is used to refer to people bound by a particular identity defined by nation, language group, ethnicity, clan, race, religion, or sexual orientation. Or, again, it refers to groupings of mutual self-interest such as a profession or association. Cutting across all of these, community can also be defined by a particular mode of interaction, such as virtual or online communities. Community often seems to be whatever people say it is, potentially incorporating every conceivable form of human grouping, even those that might otherwise strike one as contradictory.

In the context of the supposed new “fluidity” of global interchange, community has come in for sustained critique in relation to its effects on social well-being. The feminist scholar Iris Marion Young has argued that the desire for community is oppressive in that it seeks to nullify difference and, as a consequence, validates gender discrimination, racism, and ethnic chauvinism. Similarly, Zygmunt Bauman has argued that communitarianism creates an ideal of
community that is like the “home writ large,” in which there is no room for the homeless and which can also turn into an unexpected “prison” for many of the residents. Bauman is more optimistic than Young in thinking that a new kind of unity is possible—“a unity put together through negotiation and reconciliation, not the denial, stifling or smothering out of difference.” However, under conditions of what he problematically calls globalizing “liquid modernity,” he sees community as entirely a matter of individual choice—a desire to redress the growing imbalance between individual freedom and security. This is clearly not the case in Papua New Guinea. Arjun Appadurai has gone further in saying that he far prefers the “detachment of a postcolonial, diasporic, academic identity” to the “ugly realities of being racialized, minoritized, and tribalized in my everyday encounters” in local community. And he looks forward to the time when externally and internally oppressive national states will give way to “transnational social forms.” In all these cases, community as such is seen to be source of the problems of exclusion and conflict. It is our contention, however, that the theorists of this “postmodern fluid world” fail to understand the enduring, if changing and variable, possibilities of existing communities—from the local to the global.

The metaphor of fluidity has even overcome some writers on Papua New Guinea. In a book provocatively called Fluid Ontologies: Myth, Ritual and Philosophy in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea, the editors argue that the metaphors of “fire” and “water” best represent the nuances of mobility, flows, flux, and change. By comparison, in our argument it is not the ontologies or the social forms that are fluid, but rather the content—sometimes subtly, sometimes dramatically fluid, but always within a dialectic of change and continuity. That means that the trope of “ground” or “earth” continues to be as important as the tropes of fire and water. Ontologies are changing but not just as water carves the landscape or fire brings life through destruction: also as the tension between fire and physical exhaustion, water and ground.

In the contemporary world—whether it be Port Moresby or Paris—an emerging sense that one's sense of community is changing and no longer lived as a “given” is in tension with powerful subjective continuities. That is, community is no longer a relationship that a person might be drawn into, or even born into, without being forced at some time to think about its meaning, although for the most part we take such social relations for granted. Given all the variations, retraditionalizations, continuities, and transformations, the distinction made by Tönnies between “the social” cast in terms of the predominance of stable and traditional gemeinschaften or the more fluid and displaced gesellschaften is too dichotomous to be useful. However, the metaphor of flows just reverses the previous misplaced emphasis on tribal and traditional societies as fixed. It is becoming clear
that it is necessary to look at the ways in which forms of community identity are being created and re-created in relation to continuities under changing circumstances, both objectively and subjectively. The definition of community thus needs to be generalizing across quite different settings, but without simply being a matter of subjective and changing self-definition and without including all forms of association or sociality that happen to be important such as the family.

Here we define community very broadly as a group or network of persons who are connected (objectively) to each other by relatively durable social relations that extend beyond immediate genealogical ties and who mutually define that relationship (subjectively) as important to their social identity and social practice. This definition allows us to recognize that communities in Papua New Guinea do not have natural or singular boundaries. “Singular” village-based communities, to the extent that they ever existed in Papua New Guinea, were in part an outcome of the colonial period.

Communities in Papua New Guinea are located in places—in the terminology that we are about to develop, they are “grounded”—but the nature of those places is crossed by different and overlapping relations. The following discussion offers three ways of characterizing community relations: (1) grounded community relations, in which the salient feature of community life is taken to be people coming together in particular tangible settings based on face-to-face engagement; (2) lifestyle community relations, in which the key feature bringing together a community is adherence to particular attitudes and practices; and (3) projected community relations, in which neither particularistic relations nor adherence to a particular way of life are preeminent but rather the active establishment of a social space in which individuals engage in open-ended processes of constructing, deconstructing, and reconstructing identities and ethics for living.

Before elaborating these categories further, a couple of notes of caution ought to be sounded about how these different accounts of community relate to each other. First, we are distinguishing between forms of community relations, not forms of communities. When in this discussion communities are so distinguished, it is only as a shorthand designation for a community constituted in the dominance of one or another of these forms of community relations, not a complete description. The distinctions between community relations as embodied, as a lifestyle, or as projected are intended as analytical distinctions and shorthand designations. For example, the PNG concept of wantok relations has its foundation in grounded community relations, but, like the Australian concept of “mateship,” it has, at the same time, been lifted out of that context and can be used as a lifestyle relationship between relative strangers.

Second, it is not being claimed that the bundle of relations in a given com-
munity exist in practice as one or another of those pure variations. Rather, the terms are intended as offering a way into an analytical framework across which the dominant, coexistent, and/or subordinate manifestations of different community relations (and therefore different communities) can be mapped. Though one dimension of community relations can predominate in a given community—and a community can thus be designated as such—the temptation to pigeonhole this or that community into a single way of constituting community should be resisted. Such an approach can lead to a reductive approach in which the complexity of a particular community is reduced to just one of its dimensions. For example, Wisini village in the mountains of Morobe Province is a strongly grounded community, but to the extent that its people have taken on the Pariet Project of self-consciously exploring its customary foundations and trying to write its history, it has also become over the past decade an increasingly politically projected community.

Third, living in the same place as others does not automatically make a group of people a grounded community (or even, to make the point more precisely, a community characterized by the dominance of grounded community relations). To take an example, it might be expected that communities in which people live together in villages are archetypal embodied communities—and often they are. However, of itself, the simple fact of coming into regular face-to-face contact with others indicates little about how those embodied relations are structured. The experience of being pressed together in an urban settlement in Lae or Port Moresby, in which people from different places find common shelter, and the experience of walking together across customary ground where place and genealogy define the relationship of those walking are both instances of embodied interaction. However, they can be worlds apart in terms of how the social relations are structured, integrated, and enacted. In short, surface descriptions about how people interact with one another do not always reveal much about how such interactions and relations are integrated.

In the framework proposed here, then, the terms “grounded community,” “lifestyle community,” and “projected community” are used not as normatively charged descriptions but as shorthand terms to refer to the dominant forms of social relations that constitute a given community. They refer to the way in which social relations are framed and enacted without making any implicit judgment about whether they are good or bad. The purpose here is to offer a way of thinking about how communities are constituted across different ways of living and relating to others: to see how communities are constituted through the intersection of different forms of social integration from the face-to-face to the institutionally extended or disembodied, forms that overlay and overlap with one another.
Grounded Community

Attachment to particular places and to particular people are the salient features of what we are calling “grounded community relations.” In other words, relations of mutual presence and placement are central to structuring the connections between people. Except for periods of stress or political intensification—usually in response to unwanted interventions from the outside—questions about active social projection are subordinate in accounts and practices of grounded community. Such projection is usually seen in terms of what is already given and in place. In such a setting, questions about the nature of one’s lifestyle are assumed to take care of themselves so long as a given social and physical environment is in place with appropriate infrastructure such as dwellings and amenities. As will be seen in Part II, “Communities in Place,” grounded community relations can sometimes be extended over spatial distances, stretched, for example, between the city and the country, to the extent that the diaspora continues to be connected by abiding embodied relations such as through regular powerful ceremonies of birth, marriage, and death.

Thus, adherence to particular ways of life tends to spring from a taken-for-granted sense of commonality and continuity. It arises from the face-to-face bonds with other persons in one’s locale rather than from thinking about the lifestyle itself. People do not have to read from community-development tomes, self-help books, or religious tracts to confirm how to act with one another. Norms of behavior emerge from people in meaningful relations as the habitus of their being.34 Even when the religious observances of such communities break out of the confines of mythical time—in the sense that they transcendentally look forward to a world to come and go back to the beginning of time—the sense of community is strongly conditioned by local settings and is carried on through rituals and ways of living that are rooted in categories of embodiment and presence. Customary tribal communities and rural traditional communities are examples of communities in which grounded relations tend to be dominant.

Grounded community relations tend to be bounded, both socially and environmentally, though communities so characterized are not necessarily more environmentally or socially sustainable. The strengths of grounded community relations are also its weaknesses. Just as natural ecosystems can be seriously disrupted by population changes or the introduction of outside organisms, accounts of communal integrity that arise in such settings tend to point to the disruptive effects of external forces. At one extreme this can lead to xenophobia and suspicion of outsiders. At the other extreme communities can be undermined by the influx of strangers or, if the tangible resources that sustain the community are taken away, allowed to fall into a state of disrepair or restructured through processes over which the local community has no say or control. Something of
the notion of gemeinschaft survives in many mainstream and romantic ideas of community, in which local communities are threatened by centralization and loss of local control to government or corporate bureaucracy. This conception of community finds expression in some environmental philosophy, where community is seen as allowing “human-scale” development. Here community is a place where a more “authentic” life is said to be able to flourish away from the world of the mass market, the media, telecommunications, and the state—a condition of community that in a globalizing world is increasingly impossible to sustain, even in the remotest areas of Papua New Guinea.

**Lifestyle Community**

In contrast with grounded community relations, where the emphasis is on the particularities of people and place as the salient features of community, there are accounts and practices of community that give primacy to particular ways of living. In practice, this tends to take one of three forms.

*Morally framed* community relations tend to arise wherever there are relationships of trust and mutual obligation between people who agree to abide by certain morally charged ways of life. They are formed around a specified normative boundary: norms of right and wrong, appropriate and inappropriate behavior. This is the form taken by many traditional religious communities. Community here is essentially a regulative space, a means of binding people into particular ways of living. Nikolas Rose, though not an advocate of such conceptions of normatively based community relations, provides a neat characterization of such communities as “a moral field binding persons into durable relations. It is a space of emotional relationships, through which individual identities are constructed through their bonds to micro-cultures of values and meanings.”35 In Papua New Guinea, the churches have acted to layer morally framed community relations over the older grounded communities of clans, tribes, and villages. This has given those churches extraordinary purchase on community life, even if the prior forms of grounded relations continue on and the two layers of social life are in profound tension.

*Interest-based* community relations form around an interest or aesthetic inclination, where lifestyle or activity, however superficial, is evoked as the basis of the relationship. In Papua New Guinea this includes sporting and leisure-based communities, which come together for regular moments of engagement, and expatriate or diaspora communities who share commonalities of lifestyle or interest.

*Proximate* community relations come together where neighborhood or commonality of association forms a community of convenience. This is not the same as a grounded community, even though both are based in spatial proxim-
ity. As distinct from conceptions of grounded community, the cultural embedded-
ness of persons in this or that place does not define the coherence of community,
nor does the continual embodied involvement of its members with each other.

Since the salience of lifestyle community relations lies in their morally
framed, interest-based, or proximate coherence, such communities can be de-
linked from particular groups of people and particular locales. In other words,
they can be deterritorialized. Face-to-face embodied relations may be subjec-
tively important to such communities, but they might equally be constituted
through virtual or technologically mediated relations where people agree to
abide by certain conventions and bonds. In this regard, it is a potentially
more open and mobile form of community. This is its strength but also its weak-
ness. On the one hand, it tends to generate culturally thinner communities than
grounded relations. On the other hand, lifestyle relations tend to allow for more
adaptability to change.

This kind of community has gained the recent attention of the discipline
of sociology. Sociologists have become increasingly interested in ways in which
communities have become more spatially dispersed. Over forty years ago, the
US sociologist M. M. Webber suggested that improvements to communica-
tions and transport technologies had facilitated the emergence of “communi-
ties without propinquity,” that is, spatially dispersed communities that people
can choose to belong to as a result of shared interests or shared values. Many
did not share Webber’s enthusiasm for this “new” form of community, noting
that, for people such as the elderly or women with children, the weakening
of place-based grounded communities had led to greater social isolation. The
subsequent acceleration in technology-assisted compressions of time and space
further shifted attention toward the prevalence of nonlocal communities. In-
creasingly, a distinction has been drawn between the terms “community” and
“neighborhood” on the assumption that better planning of neighborhoods can
facilitate social interaction and the emergence of community identity for those
who need it. Again the emphasis is on the conscious choices that people might
make about when and where to participate.

The idea of community constituted as a space for ways of life can be seen
in liberal communitarian accounts. Advocating what he calls a “new commu-
nitarianism,” Amitai Etzioni defines community as “webs of social relations
that encompass shared meanings and above all shared values.” This concep-
tion of community also underpins recent debates around social capital, where
community is regarded as a means of generating abstracted relations of trust,
reciprocity, and mutual obligation. Communities constituted in this way are
claimed to be consonant with contemporary forms of globalization. Since webs
of trust and cooperation can be enacted via highly mediated forms of commu-
nication—although it is questionable how sustainable this is—it is accurate to say that community can be disembedded from the particularities of people and place. For new communitarians such as Etzioni, this is a virtue since it wards against settled communities becoming oppressive to individuals or subgroups. If a particular community begins to exert undue control over its members, individuals have the capacity to withdraw from it and realize different connections. In Etzioni’s words: “People are at one and the same time members of several communities, such as professional, residential and others. They can and do use these multi-memberships …to protect themselves from excessive pressure by any one community.”

Projected Community
Unlike the two other conceptions of community relations, the notion of a “projected community” is not defined by attachment to a particular place or to a particular group of people. Neither is it primarily defined by adherence to a shared set of moral norms, traditions, or mutual interests. The salient feature of projected community relations is that a community is self-consciously treated as a created entity. It is because of this primacy accorded to the created, creative, active, and projected dimension of community that the word “projected” is used. This is perhaps the most difficult idea of community to grasp, partly because it is a much more nebulous idea of community. For the advocates of projected communities, such relations are less about the particularities of place and bonds with particular others, or adherence to a particular normative frame, and more an ongoing process of self-formation and transformation. It is a means by which people create and re-create their lives with others.

Communities characterized by the dominance of projected relations can be conservative or radical, modern or postmodern. And they can be hybrid and uneven in their forms of projection. At one end of the spectrum, this process can be deeply political and grass-roots based (the term “grass roots,” or grasruts, usually has a very positive meaning in Tok Pisin, despite occasional ironical self-derision: grasruts as “ignorant”). Projected communities, at least in their more self-reflexive political form, can take the form of ongoing associations of people who seek politically expressed integration, communities of practice based on professional projects, or associative communities that seek to enhance and support individual creativity, autonomy, and mutuality.

At the other end of the spectrum, projected communities can also be trivial or transitory, manipulative or misleading. They can be overgeneralized and more akin to advertising collations. They can live off the modern search for meaning rather than respond adequately to it. Realized in this way, notions of “community” might be projected by a corporate advertiser or state spin doctor
around a succession of engagements in the so-called third place of a Starbucks café or a self-named “creative city” or “creative community.” Here older forms of community relations dissolve into postmodern fluidity where notions of settled, stable, and abiding bonds between people recede into the background.

Unless projected relations are tied back into grounded ties or lifestyle commonalities, such communities tend be superficial and unstable, constantly dissolving and regenerating, despite the best of intentions otherwise. Empty reflexivity—that is, treating oneself or one’s community either as an abstracted object of projected development or as the romanticized subject of self-actualization—achieves little. Moreover, as will become apparent in our profiles of different PNG communities, unless reflexive projection of alternative pathways of development is linked to resources and negotiated outside support, it can end up in bitter frustration and counterproductive cynicism.

Thus, in summary, we have mapped the following kinds of community formations:

1. grounded community relations
2. lifestyle community relations
   - community life as morally bounded
   - community life as interest-based
   - community life as proximately related
3. projected community relations
   - community life as thin projection
   - community life as reflexively projected (as uncritical self-actualization)
   - community life as reflexively projected (as self-critical engagement)

What does this mean for Papua New Guinea? In terms of local community formation, it means that older relations of grounded identity and integration continue but are brought into tension with newer upheavals, including badly managed attempts at nation-building, mining development, industrial fishing, and commodity-based agriculture. More than four-fifths of people live in rural areas, and approximately 95 percent of land is under customary title. The population is sparsely spread, and while lines of intercultural trade and translocal movement of persons have long been a feature of the country, people have traditionally been organized into distinct and relatively integral villages interchanging with one another across the separations of distance, environment, and language (there are over seven-hundred languages indigenous to Papua New Guinea). Because of this, forms of community in Papua New Guinea have been, and continue to be, fundamentally shaped by forms of social relationship such as reciprocity associated with village life and relationships to place. As James
Weiner suggests, place and landscape have a profound role in anchoring forms of sociality in Papua New Guinea. In other words, Papua New Guinea is predominantly made up of grounded communities. What we are suggesting is that, notwithstanding the deep history of such communities, their resilience cannot be taken for granted—quite the opposite.

Communities are under threat, both from within and from outside. This makes the formation of a national community an incredibly complex process, particularly in the context of intensifying globalization. Historically nations have been formed as contradictory communities of strangers, projected communities that subjectively present themselves either as grounded communities (for example, the older “continuous” nations of Europe) or as lifestyle communities (the urbanized “settler” nations of the West). However, for Papua New Guinea, where grounded communities still continue to predominate at the local level, the transfer of the subjectivities of grounded loyalty and identity over to the national level is fraught.

Our argument is that the localized grounded communities of Papua New Guinea need to take on a level of self-conscious, self-critical, and politically reflexive projection in order to take the strengths of their ground—people and place—into a difficult and changing world. This is a world that no longer allows grounded communities to change incrementally and organically through the vagaries of fate, memory, or contingency. It is a world that uses romantic conceptions of place and people and instrumentalizes them for other purposes. A number of writers describe the late 1960s and 1970s as a time in Papua New Guinea when concepts and practices of modernism and traditionalism—called “new ways” and “old ways” by locals—intensified their claim on the indigenous culture. Across the transition from the colonial and postcolonial experience, as discussed in the next chapter—where we use a less dichotomous understanding of intersecting ontological formations, namely, tribalism, traditionalism, modern, and postmodernism, as relations in tension—modernizing pressures certainly came into contention with both customary tribal (indigenous) and religious traditional (colonial) relations. And as different indigenous cultural practices were treated to varying levels of outlawing, protection, or encouragement by both colonial authorities and external religious and governmental influences, an essentializing view of culture, and thereby of community practices—good and bad, progressive and backward-looking—was also being put in place. Against this essentializing view, we are suggesting that the positive projection of community life cannot be achieved as a simple “return to the past” or to “old ways.” It entails walking knowingly in more than one world at the same time—tribal, traditional, and modern.

Other factors as diverse as the coming of radio and rock-and-roll or the
construction of roads and airstrips to mining lands and missions provided what
many view as the social watershed that inaugurated “new times, new ways of
thinking and living, new forms of social organization and settlement.”46 (By the
same process, we constantly found that our own research activities—accruing
ambivalent status by being a global research team with members from the na-
tional government—also engendered reflection on the present just by our be-
ing there.) Whether the pressures are positive or negative, this is the context
in which reflexive projection becomes necessary for communities that do not
want to be swept away into the dominant currents of change and hope to make
choices about the form that development will take.

Reconciliation across the Frictions of Change

To summarize the entire book in a few words, most people in Papua New
Guinea live in grounded communities, and these kinds of communities are un-
der serious threat here, as they are across the world. This suggests both vulner-
abilities and distinct possibilities for alternative paths. Our vision for possible
alternatives has a number of underlying considerations that cross the various
domains of the circle of sustainability.

The first consideration is a cry that passively standing still or even actively
resisting change is not sustainable. Unless grounded communities, the dom-
inant form of community in Melanesia, reflexively project how they want to
live—that is, unless, grounded communities come to reflect on and to politi-
cally project the kinds of social development that are appropriate through ex-
tended local and public dialogue—they will either slowly disintegrate, at least as
grounded communities, or come to depend up parochial boundaries or isolation
to maintain the putative integrity of their community. Reflexivity means more
than reflection: it entails critical reflection on the nature of the reflection, dis-
cussion of what is to be done, and interrogation of the processes of dialogue that
will be used to make decisions.

The second consideration starts with a recognition of the complexity of the
process. Extended dialogue and critical self-reflection are extraordinarily dif-
ficult to maintain in isolation. They are best conducted through processes of
learning that draw upon both local and external expertise, and both custom-
ary and modern knowledges, including comparative exploration of continuing
current ways of doing things and introducing other ways of doing things from
communities in Melanesia and beyond. This, of course, is paradoxical. In order
to project other paths—including the possibility of reproducing and revivifying
practices associated with tribal and traditional lifeways—communities need to
take on levels of reflexivity associated with processes of modern knowing. The
process of “both-ways learning” across the differences of the tribal, the tradi-
tional, and the modern is not simple. It is elaborated upon in Chapter 11. Picking up on an apparent resonance with other writers in the field, some readers have suggested that we are advocating what Ulrich Beck would describe as “reflexive modernization.” At this stage we will say no more than that any such reference is unintended, and the distinctive differences between our use of the term “reflexive” and Beck’s will unfold as the book proceeds (see particularly Chapter 12). Both-ways politics, in our view, entails not just another modernity but a lived reconciliation—with all the continuing discomfort and tension that such a process always entails—between ontologically different ways of doing things: tribal, traditional, and modern. Reconciliation does not mean collapsing different lifeways into (even) a Melanesian version of the modern. Rather, we are talking about living with what James Tully calls “strange multiplicities.”

The third consideration concerns political and cultural sustainability. Although active projection of other paths to development can occur organically and serendipitously within communities, it tends not to be sustainable without some form of political institutionalization and support. In other words, sustainability requires consideration of not just economics and ecology, but also politics and culture. Reading through the discussion of different communities (see Part II), it becomes apparent that there is a high degree of self-consciousness about development issues in Papua New Guinea. However, this tends to be uneven, unsupported, and, at times, a source of conflict between different members of the community. In the context of contemporary Papua New Guinea, politically sensitive institutionalization needs to provide an adequate interface for negotiating a number of competing issues—most pressingly between tribal, traditional, and modern formations of sociality, including governance, economic production, resource allocation, and learning. Customary leadership as it is currently configured cannot provide such an interface. Neither, however, can the modern state. Indeed, the usual form of institutionalization tends to set up counterproductive and unintended consequences to the extent that it demands overly simplifying and directly replicable procedures. “Seeing like a state”—that is, looking for simple singular solutions, to use James Scott’s phrase—is bound to fail. In short, any moves toward institutionalization need to be done in relation to local complexities.

Currently, institutionalizing development at the community level in Papua New Guinea—the setting up of relatively enduring public bodies of practice—has tended to be either relatively ad hoc and rolled out project by project, or formalized and, at least in intention, channeled through local-level government. The former has been hit and miss; the latter has been mired in politics and lack of capacity. Hence we are proposing other paths that complement both reforms in the process of delivering foreign aid and reforms in governance. The cen-
tral focus here is on institutionalizing what can be called “community learning and development centers.” Such centers, whether they are centered on a rough patapata under a mango tree or a dedicated community building with extensive resources, should be located within communities and run by communities. At the same time, they should be recognized and given both state and non-governmental support from the outside. Such centers should be local in their decision-making processes and dialogical in their politics, but more than that they need to become sites for negotiation (and partnership where appropriate) with “outsiders.”

In effect, these centers could provide settings for different versions of deliberative democracy that recognize the intersecting structures of authority in the locale. They could become sites through which people in communities negotiate with institutions such as the state, aid agencies, churches, and other national and international organizations over possibilities for supporting the resourcing of local development projects and programs in basic areas such as livelihoods (Chapters 7 and 8), health (Chapters 9 and 10), and education (Chapters 11 and 12). Such centers as part of an integrated community development approach would thus provide an alternative to the corporate or welfare state model. This approach requires self-determination at the level of local communities but within a multilayered framework supported by others, including the state as representative of the larger community of the nation.

In the last few paragraphs we have in effect presented the conclusions to our overall project—not just this chapter. This should not suggest that these conclusions were clear to us as we began the journey. And even at the end of this stage they are finalized contingently for the purposes of communicating our thoughts and research findings. Our conclusions will potentially be changed and refined in the process of practical implementation and policy development over the coming years, but they are built upon carefully considered premises.

Too often in the past, policy has been based on taken-for-granted assumptions and implemented through top-down directives rather than as a mutual process of dialogue, research, policy writing, and implementation between communities, researchers, and policy makers. Hence the present project began with and continues to be based on a number of premises. Long-term and continuing research, including assessment and monitoring, is important to all development policies, projects, and their implementation. Most development projects in the Global South either falter soon after the resources are withdrawn or generate a complex of unintended and counterproductive consequences. Moreover, understanding communities and implementing good policy requires working across all levels of social extension from the local and regional to the national and global, from communities, community-based organizations, customary
forms of governance, local nongovernment organizations (NGOs), churches and other religious groups, and local-level and provincial governments to the national and international levels, including national PNG government departments and international organizations. As one of the basic premises, we work on the understanding that the carefully qualified involvement of government policy and program officers (from national, provincial, and local-level government) in the research process will, if handled well, enhance the capacity for effective community engagement. It has the potential to enhance alignment between the policy and program delivery of different levels of government and the communities they serve and to contribute to the skills training of government officers through learning by doing. Government participants in the present project were inducted from the beginning into engaged research as part of the policy-development process by being involved from the very first articulation of the project overview.

Important ethical issues are raised when academics are engaged as consultants by government and industry in Papua New Guinea, and the difficulties this presents in terms of maintaining a critical distance from the industry and/or government position are manifold. Stuart Kirsch argues that rather than adopting the distanced, scientific stance of an impartial observer, academics undertaking research in Papua New Guinea, particularly those spending extended periods of time with local communities, have an obligation to act as community activists. In David Hyndman’s words, “Activism is a responsible extension of the anthropological commitment to maintain reciprocal relations with the people with whom we work.”51 This argument, for us, needs to be teased out into its various dimensions. While the present project does not follow the community-activist path (see the discussion of action research in the next chapter), it is conducted within the ethos of reciprocity and mutuality, recognizing, for example, the complementarity of local and outside knowledges, the need for long-term engagement, and the requirement of returning the research to the communities. Elise Huffer takes a comparable line, suggesting that close collaboration between communities and researchers is an important and valuable means through which it is possible not only for outside interests such as scholars and consultants to develop an ethical framework for their own work, but also for communities themselves to become engaged in questions and discussions about their own ethical standards.52

Overall, Sustainable Communities, Sustainable Development begins as an inquiry into pressing political and economic concerns, but also goes beyond them to address issues and questions across all the domains of social life that take us into the subjectivity of living locally in places stretched and remade by reclaimed customary practices, national interventions, and global pressures. What are the
stories and histories through which different groups of people are responding to their nation’s development? What is the everyday social environment of very different communities of people—those in migrant settlements and urban villages compared with those in more remote communities—all of whom daily negotiate the legacies of tribalism, the colonial past, and the contemporary challenges of living? While newspaper articles abound, portraying urban centers as sites of criminal violence or depicting rural communities as places of unthinking primordialism, in this book we seek to contribute to a creative and dynamic grass-roots response to the demands of everyday life and local-global pressures.

While the overdeveloped world faces an intersecting crisis that cuts to the foundation of the human condition—global climate change, global financial crisis, contingency of meaning, and the breakdown of institutions that used to provide a haven in a heartless world—Papua New Guinea, with all its difficulties—redoubled in urban centers—still has the basis for responding to that manifold crisis. Its secret lies in what has been seen by most people as its weakness—“underdeveloped” economies and communities. Most persons in Papua New Guinea, for all the pressures they face, still live in sustainable community relations to each other and to the natural world. However, this is not a strength that can be taken for granted or romanticized. There is a lot of work to done if the possibilities are to be realized and sustained.

Notes


11. In a way we are getting ahead of ourselves by using concepts such as “modern” so pointedly before the theoretical work has been done to define precisely how they are being used (see Chapter 2 on ontological formations—tribal, traditional, and modern). Here the adjective “modern” is used to qualify the concept of cargo-cult to distinguish the point being made here from the usual clichéd disparagement of tribal communities for any elaborated desire for material goods. As Frederick Errington and Deborah Gewertz argue in criticism of the usual approach to tribal acquisition (and, in particular, of Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, Vintage, London, 1998), “Things have value because they can be used in transactions to establish relationships of recognition and respect” (*Yali’s Question: Sugar, Culture, & History*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2004, pp. 22–23). Modern cargo-cultism in this sense refers to the way modern capitalist consumption comes to overlay and further complicate older practices of reciprocal exchange.

12. Superannuantes received 8 percent net of tax return on an after-tax profit for NASFUND of 74.116 million kina, compared to negative returns of around minus 20 percent in Australian balanced funds. *NASFUND Newsletter*, February 2009.

13. Palm oil is the largest agricultural export-income earner with exports in 2006 at K660 million compared to logs at K490 million and coffee at K373 million. Local communities are becoming more aware of the social costs of palm oil. In 2008, for example, the people of Woodlark Island rejected an offer by Vitroplant, despite a feasibility study said that it was economically viable. In the area of logging, “impact projects” as part of the national government’s recovery plan are required to establish 25,000 to 30,000 hectares of forest plantations, and so-called non-impact projects are required to go into downstream processing. (*Gavamani Sivarai*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2008). Whether this occurs in practice is a different matter.


16. Care needs to be taken in interpreting all of these issues: Maxine Pitts, *Crime,*
Corruption and Capacity in Papua New Guinea, Asia Pacific Press, Canberra, 2002; Gina Koczberski, George N. Curry, and John Connell, “Full Circle or Spiralling Out of Control? State Violence and the Control of Urbanisation in Papua New Guinea,” Urban Studies, vol. 38, no. 11, pp. 2017–2036; and Gina Koczberski and George N. Curry, “Divided Communities and Contested Landscapes: Mobility, Development and Shifting Identities in Migrant Destination Sites in Papua New Guinea,” Asia Pacific Viewpoint, vol. 45, no. 3, 2005, pp. 57–71. For an example of a superficial developmentalist take on the slow crisis, see Diana Cammack, Chronic Poverty in Papua New Guinea, Chronic Poverty Research Centre, Manchester, 2008. For all of its authoritative stance and apparent detailed research in-country, the report is thin and often misleading, but this does not mean that concerns about the slow crisis should not be taken seriously.

17. For example, from the poster distributed by the Bismarck Ramu Group NGO in Madang Province, “Industrial Logging is Giaman Development,” first produced in 2003 and still being distributed more than five years later.


29. Ibid., p. 178.


31. Ibid., p. 177.


33. The theoretical framework of “engaged theory” that underpins the present project comes from Paul James, Globalism, Nationalism, Tribalism: Bringing Theory Back In, Sage Publications, London, 2006. The discussion of different forms of community is adapted from work done by Chris Scanlon and developed in Martin Mul ligan, Paul James, Kim Humphery, Chris Scanlon, Pia Smith, and Nicky Welch, Creating Community: Celebrations, Arts and Wellbeing within and across Local Communities, VicHealth and the Globalism Research Centre, Melbourne, 2007, ch. 2.


43. Andrew J. Strathern and Gabriel Stürzenhofecker, eds., Migration and Trans-


45. See among others, Edward LiPuma, Encompassing Others: The Magic of Modernity in Melanesia, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 2001, ch. 2; Bruce Knauft, Exchanging the Past: A Rainforest World of Before and After, University of Chicago Press, 2002; Errington and Gewertz, Yali’s Question.


47. Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens, and Scott Lash, Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition, Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1994. Of the three authors our position is closest to that of Anthony Giddens, but even in this case there are profound differences, including in how we use the concept of “reflexivity.” See Chapter 11 below.


49. “Institutions” as we define them are publicly enacted, relatively enduring bodies of practice, procedures, and norms, ranging from formalized legal entities such as states, corporations, or registered NGOs, to more informal but legally buttressed and abiding sets of practices and regimes such as “the capitalist market” or “the family.” The key phrases here are “publicly enacted” and “relatively enduring.” The phrase “publicly enacted” in this sense implies active projection, legal sanction, and, as often as not, some kind of opposition. An institution is constituted in relation to a res publica, a public domain beyond the individual. It requires some form of authorization, whether it is myth and custom, in the case of tribally formed societies; God, Nature, or the Sovereign, in the case of societies formed in the dominance of traditionalism; or more abstract processes of sanctioning and legitimation such as those offered by the modern state, in the case of societies formed in the dominance of modernism. The phrase “relatively enduring” does not preclude changes, or even basic transformations, in the form of an institution, but it does point to a central defining dimension that is continuous despite the changes.

50. James A. Scott, Seeing like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1998. Scott argues that centrally managed social plans derail when they impose schematic visions that do violence to complex interdependencies that are not, and cannot be, fully understood. The success of designs for social organization depends primarily on the recognition that local, practical knowledge is as important as formal, epistemic knowledge.

51. David Hyndman, “Academic Responsibilities and Representation of the Ok
Tedi Crisis in Postcolonial Papua New Guinea,” *The Contemporary Pacific*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2001, pp. 33–54, quote from p. 15; Stuart Kirsch, “Anthropologists and Global Alliances: Comment,” *Anthropology Today*, vol. 12, no. 4, 1996, pp. 14–16; Brian Brunton, “The Perspective on a Papua New Guinean NGO,” in Glenn Banks and Chris Ballard, eds., *The Ok Tedi Settlement: Issues, Outcomes and Implications*, National Centre for Development Studies and Resource Management in Asia-Pacific, National University, Canberra, 1997, pp. 167–182. The debate over the Ok Tedi mine intensified discussions about the responsibility of the researcher to act politically in response to exploitation and degradation. In our view, individual researchers may have a responsibility to act politically and if conducted ethically to use their research to do so; however, this does not make the research process itself a form of activism, participatory or otherwise.